

MASONRY IN MANITOBA

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THE GREAT LIGHT

For some four hundred years in the history of Operative Freemasonry a Freemason, like every other man in Britain or Europe, could not read or write, not only because there were no schools except for the very rich, but also because there was no printing, and wherever there is no printing learning is a luxury beyond the means of the rank and file of ordinary men. Yet the circumstances under which such a Freemason then lived, and the exigencies of his own work, made it necessary for him to know an outline of the history of his own Craft (otherwise questions of craft jurisdiction could not be settled) and also to know the rules and regulations under which he had to work. When an apprentice took his oath, it was not a pledge to be true to general or abstract ideas but a definite pledge to obey orders of his officers and to live and work according to rules which governed his tools, materials, clothing, behavior, and many similar things.

The whole body of history, rules, regulations, obligations, and laws was carried in the memories of the craftsmen and was passed on by the old members to the new members by oral transmission. It had to be learned by heart. Since not only his happiness but also his right to work and to earn a living for himself and family depended on having it by heart, each craftsman made sure of having it letter-perfect. There was no uncertainty about it, no vagueness, no liberty of each man to change it to please himself; from beginning to end it was as clear-cut as a page of writing, as well organized as a book; and if we had any means to recover it, we could treat it as if it were a document.

In the middle of the fourteenth century two changes occurred. The civil government enacted a law which required gilds and fraternities to reduce their rules and regulations to writing and to file a copy with municipal authorities. At London, at York, or at Gloucester, or perhaps at all three, Freemasons did not dissolve a lodge after a building was completed, as had always been done before, but decided to make it permanent; this made it necessary for them to have a written charter, as was also required by law, therefore that lodge employed a scribe to draw up a document. In this document the lodge sought to show that it was entitled to a charter because Freemasonry was both ancient and honorable; it then made the claim, which the authorities accepted, that King Athelstan had granted a written Royal Charter to Freemasons in 926; and it concluded with a statement of the rules, regulations, parts, and points of Masonic law. To conform to the civil law this lodge kept this document exposed on a pedestal in front of the

Master's station. Other lodges followed that lead, and as each one did so it made a copy of the document. Since then the document has been variously styled Old Charges, Old Constitutions, Masonic Institutes, Old Manuscripts, etc.

Within two or three years after it had been erected at London in 1717, the first Grand Lodge found it necessary to have such a document of its own, and for similar reasons, therefore a committee was appointed, with Dr. James Anderson as chairman, though George Payne had already written out the regulations. This Grand Lodge version of the Old Charges was printed in 1723, and was called the Book of Constitutions. As lodges came under the authority of this new Grand Lodge, or as new lodges were chartered by it, they began to replace their manuscript copy of the Old Charges with a printed copy of the Book, and apprentices took their oath upon it. In the meantime, however, the ancient Old Charges had become so imbedded in the rites and symbolisms of the Ritual that though the new lodges used the printed book they still possessed, at least in substance, most of the old unprinted or unwritten history, rules, and regulations, and that continues to be true.

But in some twelve or thirteen years after the first Grand Lodge was organized in London, and for use by lodges in and around London, lodges began to be set up in France, Spain, and in the Americas, and then, after another short period of time, they began to multiply all over the world, as far away as India and Malaya. Since the rules and regulations in the Book of Constitutions had been drawn in England, on a basis of ancient English customs, and for use in England, lodges abroad had difficulty in making use of the printed Book of Constitutions. Something more general, more universal, was needed.

This was found in the Holy Bible, and it began gradually to replace the Book of Constitutions on the pedestal. But when thus used, the Bible was not taken to be a theological text-book, but rather was used as a volume in which the fundamental principles of Masonic law could be found, and therefore it was called Volume of the Sacred Law.

The Grand Lodge officially endorsed its use for such a purpose in 1760 when by formal action it declared the Bible to be a Great Light.

—*Historicus in Iowa Bulletin.*

THE UNAFFILIATED BROTHER

It is evident that we have a large number of Masons in the jurisdiction who are unaffiliated with any Lodge. They carry demits from their Mother Lodge and do not seem to realize that they are not active members in the Craft. Others have come to reside in Manitoba and retain membership in lodges far removed from their place of residence. The visitors' registers in all our lodges indicate in a small way that we have many who continue to enjoy the fellowship of our meetings but for some reason have not associated themselves with the local lodge. This is a poor type of Masonry.

It came to our notice some time ago that a patient in one of the hospitals was a Brother Mason. The Junior Warden of a Lodge in the City visited him regularly, then, ascertaining the name of his Lodge wrote advising the facts. Later, word came that he had demitted some years previously. That did not lessen the interest of the local Junior Warden, but it goes to show that something might have developed and the fact that the sick brother was not in good standing in any lodge would probably have complicated matters. If a man claims to be a Mason he should see to it that a demit is not a certificate of membership but is merely a document signifying that he had resigned membership in the Lodge issuing the demit.

When we hear of a brother from another lodge coming to our district to make his home we can give practical demonstration of brotherhood by making a place for this brother in our meetings. He will need very little urging to affiliate if the proper welcome is extended by the Worshipful Master and his members.

Again, let us sound a note of caution. It is made perfectly clear in our Constitutions that a brother who holds a demit can only enjoy the privilege of visiting a Manitoba Lodge for twelve months from the date of the demit. We are careless in this regard and once a visitor has established his identity we do not seem to make a re-check of his documentary evidence.

If you have among your Masonic friends or fellow workers a brother who carries a demit and has delayed taking steps to transfer his membership might we suggest that you be an ambassador of brotherhood and invite him to share in the activities of your home lodge. Absentee membership, regardless of the sentiment connected with "Our Mother Lodge" will never accomplish the great goal of the Masonic Fraternity.

We don't need special Committees to carry this suggestion into effect. More can be accomplished by the personal touch and you can help in making better Masons out of the unaffiliated members who are located in all parts of our wide jurisdiction.

MASONIC WORDS—CLANDESTINE

Far back in the dim beginning of European history Sanskrit-speaking people had a root word which we should spell as "clam," and which meant something secret, hidden, concealed. It was preserved in the Greek language, then passed from it into Latin where it took the form of *clandestinus*, from which we have our word *clandestine*. The newspapers use it in the sense of something illicit, but there is no need that the term should always denote something in that bad sense.

In Freemasonry it is used technically, and receives its definition from laws enacted by Grand Lodges for the government of their members. We do not have such a definition in our Constitution. Mackey has this to say on the subject; "A body of Masons uniting in a Lodge without the consent of a Grand Lodge, or although originally legally constituted, continuing to work after its charter has been revoked is styled a *Clandestine Lodge*." One of our neighbouring Grand Lodges gives two paragraphs on the word, in their Code. "A clandestine lodge is one working without a warrant or charter from a recognized Grand Lodge . . . None are Masons unless made in a lodge working under authority of a recognized Grand Lodge."

Turning again to Mackey we learn that a *Clandestine Mason* is one made in or affiliated with a clandestine lodge. With clandestine Lodges or Masons, regular Masons are forbidden to associate or converse on Masonic subjects.

WEARING THE APRON

About three years ago we wrote an article on this subject. In the interval it is interesting to observe in many lodges that the brethren read the item and have personally applied the suggestion that we should never conceal this the oldest connection with Operative Masonry.

Recently we read in an exchange an item on the subject. The writer went a great deal further than we did and it will be of more than passing interest to the brethren who are really concerned that Masons should hold fast to that which is true. It is therefore with pleasure that we quote, in part, some of the things said by R.W. Brother A. Roberts, a Past District Grand Master in Australia.

"With such symbolism as the Apron presents to a Freemason, he is meant to realize the nature and significance of being clothed with such a badge; that he must never disgrace it, for it will never disgrace him. Clothed with this bond of friendship, it is clear that if a brother neglects such advice, he disgraces himself and

not the Apron. Thus the Apron, like a sign of the highway, should have nothing to obstruct its view, every part being fully displayed as an ever-ready guide on the way to Masonic duties.

“Early illustrations—dating back to 1723—of the wearing of the Apron, show them in various shapes, sizes and designs; but in all these illustrations the Apron is shown on the OUTSIDE of the ordinary dress, and this is as it should be.

“Although the clothing of early days lent itself to the full view of the Apron, the change in man’s attire today cannot and should not alter the significance of the Apron, nor hide any part of it from view, for as a whole it has a deep symbolic import and conveys its important and instructive lesson. As the badge of a Freemason no coat or garment should obstruct or cover it from view. Every brother when ‘properly clothed’ in the Lodge should feel so proud of this great emblem, he should see that it is in full view to all, for it is the most important article of Masonic Clothing.

“Illustrations in the large number of Masonic journals which are published today show brethren both singly and in groups wearing the Apron outside the ordinary clothing. In one of these journals, Brother Elbert Bede says; ‘If there is a purpose in wearing the distinguished badge of a Mason in the Lodge room, it should be worn in such a manner as to show not only pride of the owner as being one of those who may wear such a badge, but also that it may serve the purpose for which it is intended. Our Masonry may be invisible, but the Apron shouldn’t be.

“Constitutions exist which definitely declare ‘The brethren shall be clothed with Aprons worn on the outside of the coat.’

“The Masonic Apron is our emblem of innocence and the badge of a Freemason. Worn by the Operative Mason to protect his clothing, we as Speculative Masons wear it to symbolize protection from the vices of life, and the defilement of the world. The Apron which does not protect the clothing is of little use; likewise the Apron which is but partly shown, does not fittingly symbolize protection from vice. Therefore, strictly speaking, the Apron should be worn outside the coat, not underneath it.

“The Apron should at all times be treated with respect. There is but one position in which it can be worn, as already stated; swinging it around the coat at the back is a very serious misconception of its true worth. Neither should it be handled as if it was a piece of waste rag—pushed any way into the coat pocket—or thrown down on a nearby chair. It should at all times be placed away with the utmost care.

“To repeat once again; ‘The Apron is the badge of a Freeson.’ It is the most important article of Masonic clothing. May we always remember and wear it as such.”

THE CHAIN LETTER HUMBUG

Again there seems to be a flood menacing Manitoba. This time it is not the waters of the Red but those hateful, senseless, stupid concoctions that seem to pop up every few years. This present avalanche is directed to and is being circulated by members of the Craft. One paragraph instructs the victim to write to "MASONS ONLY."

We are surprised to learn that many brethren take the superstitious threat to their personal well-being seriously. If there exists a body of men who should understand just what to do with these missives it is our Masonic brethren. Yet, from different parts of the jurisdiction men are asking questions as to the reason the circulation is being continued. Of course we cannot stop a man from doing things of this nature but we can tell him that credulity and superstition has no place in the ranks of Freemasonry.

Should you receive one of these abominations then the finest service you can render to yourself and your brother Masons is to promptly throw it into the ash-can. To those who fall for the rubbish contained in the letter we have but one comment, "O ye of little faith."

YOUR WILL

Occasionally we are asked by members for particulars as to bequests for Masonic purposes. The following form may be used by any Brother desiring to make provision for the benefit of the Benevolent Endowment Fund of the Grand Lodge;

"I give unto my Executor (or Executors) the sum of.....
..... (\$.....) upon trust to pay the same
to the Grand Secretary for the time being, of the Grand Lodge of
Manitoba, Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons, for the purposes
and benefit of the said Grand Lodge, and I declare that the receipt
for such sum, of the said Grand Secretary shall be an absolute dis-
charge for such payment."